

Take your faith to work: Finding the balance between work and rest

Message for Sunday, September 21, 2014
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; Genesis 2:2;
Psalm 90:12

Children's Message:

Psalm 90:12, New Living Translation:
Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we
may grow in wisdom.

Ask for a volunteer. Give the person a balloon to hold; it represents the time for sleeping. Another balloon represents the time spend eating breakfast, lunch and supper. Doing your chores around home. Praying, reading the Bible. Playing. Going to worship at church. Going to school. Homework. Getting together with friends. Soccer practice and soccer games. Reading a book. Going to the store. Watching TV. Music lessons. By now the person will be unable to hold onto all the balloons.

Point: this is what life is like for a lot of people: we're trying to do too much, and there isn't enough time for it all.

The Bible says, "Teach us to make the most of our time, so that we may grow in wisdom." "Make the most of our time" doesn't mean packing as much as possible into every minute of our lives. We can see that's not being wise.

So here are some ideas for how to handle this overload. Which do you think is wise?

- Go faster. Run from one thing to another. Hurry!
- Do nothing. Let other people do things for you.
- Do fewer things. Pick out the things that are really important, and take time to enjoy them.

Message: "Take your faith to work: Finding the balance between work and rest"

Starting a couple of weeks ago, I've been preaching on various passages in the Bible which have to do with work.

Some things we've learned so far:

- All of us work. Whether we get paid for it doesn't change the fact that it's work.
- Whatever our job might be, we are working for God.
- God works, too.
- Work is a blessing from God.

1) Work for your living; don't be lazy

Here's a story about a man who discovered how to get rich quick: rob a bank. A man in California went into a Bank of America in San Francisco and wrote out a stick up note on the back of a deposit slip. He got in line to present his note to the teller, but while he was in line he started thinking that maybe somebody saw him writing the stick up note. Maybe they were calling the police right now. So he decided to get out of line and go across the street to the Wells-Fargo bank. He had to wait in line there, too, but finally he got up to a teller and presented her with the note.

The teller observed that the man was very nervous and perhaps wasn't very bright. She said to him, "I'm sorry, but we can't take stick up notes written on Bank of America deposit slips. You will have to get back in line and write out another note on one of our slips." Well, the man was too lazy to write two stick up notes in one day so he went back across the street to the Bank of America and got in line there – and that's exactly where the police found him a few minutes later.

Of course God teaches us in the Bible that stealing is wrong. But let's look deeper. Let's look at the motive here: someone wants to have plenty of money, but isn't willing to work for it. What does the Bible say about that?

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12, New Century Version:
Brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ we command you to stay away from any believer who refuses to work and does not follow the teaching we gave you. You yourselves know that you should live as we live. We were not lazy when we were with you. And when we ate another person's food, we always paid for it. We worked very hard night and day so we would not be an expense to any of you. We had the right to ask you to help us, but we worked to take care of ourselves so we would be an example for you to follow. When we were with you, we gave you this rule: "Anyone who refuses to work should not eat."

We hear that some people in your group refuse to work. They do nothing but busy themselves in other people's lives. We command those people and beg them in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and earn their own food.

That's pretty straightforward. "Don't be lazy. Work for your living."

It's not just about getting rich quick (hmm, I wonder if you could apply this passage to buying lottery tickets. I don't know... something to think about). It's about in general getting results without effort. Winning without working.

God's word says work for your living.

2) Don't just do something; sit there

Then, of course, you can take work to the other extreme: being a workaholic.

Edwin Land invented the Polaroid camera and was notorious for his marathon research sessions. People at the Polaroid company still talk about the legendary time when Land and his partner were at the critical point in their discovery of instant photographic developing, which made the Polaroid camera possible. They had been working around the clock day after day, sleeping only when necessary, and that on tables in the laboratory. At one point Land's partner said he was exhausted and would have to take a break from work.

"Good," Land said, "we can get our Christmas shopping out of the way."

"Ed," his partner said, "It's January 3rd!"

Last week we read the story of creation from Genesis, which concludes with this.

Genesis 2:2, New Living Translation:

On the seventh day, having finished his task, God rested from all his work.

God works, and God rests. Last week when we read this passage, I focussed on the word "work." I said that God has blessed work. It is good. It is a gift from God.

Now we look at the other side of the coin. God has blessed rest. Rest is good. It is a gift from God.

So many people today aren't accepting that gift. People who do research in this kind of thing find that people now sleep 2½ fewer hours each night than people did a hundred years ago. You're sleeping less than your grandparents did.

God rests. So should we. We need to take time for rest and relaxation.

3) Find the balance between work and rest

Richard Swenson is a medical doctor. He found that for the vast majority of his patients, their problems were not caused by germs or accidents, but by stress. They had head pain, back pain, stomach pain, you-name-it pain – but when he sat down with them and listened to them describe their life, stress was their main trouble. So instead of prescribing drugs, he started giving them written doctor's orders to stop and slow: stop the unnecessary things, and slow down everything else. The

results were so remarkable, he wrote it up in medical journals for his colleagues and in books for the public.

Here is an excerpt from his book *Margin*:

The conditions of modern day living devour margin. Marginless is being 30 minutes late to the doctor's office because you were 20 minutes late getting out of the hairdresser because you were 10 minutes late dropping the children off at school because the car ran out of gas two blocks from a gas station and you forgot your purse. That's marginless.

Margin, on the other hand, is having breath at the top of the staircase, money at the end of the month, and sanity left over at the end of adolescence. Margin is grandma taking the baby for the afternoon. Margin is having a friend help carry the burden. Marginless is not having time to finish the book you're reading on stress. Margin is having the time to read it twice. Marginless is our culture. Margin is counter-culture, having some space in your life and schedule. Marginless is the disease of our decade and margin is the cure.

Preacher Rick Warren put it this way:

The solution is to put some margin into your life. Margin is breathing room. It's keeping a little reserve that you're not using up. It's not going from one meeting to the next to the next with no space in between.

Margin is the space between your load and your limit. Hopefully your load is not heavier than your limits. But the truth is that most of us are far more overloaded than we can handle, and there is no margin for error in our lives.

I think this Bible verse sums it up beautifully.

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Next Steps:

- Where are you on the spectrum between lazy and workaholic?
- What do you need to do, in order to have balance in your life between work and rest?